

STAFF REPORT

TO: Mayor and Council

DATE: 7/10/2007

VIA: Gary W. Jackson, City Manager

FROM: Lauren Bradley, Assistant to the City Manager

RE: Community Forum on Homelessness Summary Report

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary and analysis of community input collected on the issue of homelessness in Asheville. Feedback was collected at a community forum hosted by Asheville City Council on May 29, 2007. The city also collected written comments from the public after the forum. In addition, staff has collected data from an observational survey conducted in Pritchard Park the week of June 25. Based on this information, the report includes staff recommendations for the Pritchard Park Committee as well as areas for further analysis or consideration.

Community input revealed concerns about three areas into which the following analysis is divided: the maintenance and aesthetics of Pritchard Park, homelessness, and downtown social issues.

Pritchard Park

Three common themes related to Pritchard Park surfaced from the community input: park maintenance, park operations/programming and park design/amenities. Analysis for each area is included below.

A. Pritchard Park Maintenance

The city has started implementing measures to address deferred maintenance in Pritchard Park followed by steps to maintain it at appropriate levels. The city has started or completed maintenance items including replacing mulch, repairing the ornamental fountains, pressure washing concrete areas, cleaning or replacing damaged infrastructure, repairing trash receptacles and installing cigarette urns. The balance of this work will be complete no later than mid-July. The park will be pressure washed again after Bele Chere. A city crew will empty trash receptacles, remove litter, rake mulch and take care of routine maintenance items every morning, seven days a week. Crews will conduct inspections on the park's fountains, pumps and electrical once per week.

B. Park Operations and Programming

The most common community suggestion for Pritchard Park operations was an "adopt-a-park" or "park ambassador" program. Park ambassador programs have been used as a way to monitor and manage activities in high use parks while also adding enhanced coordination of park programming during peak hours. The city of Asheville has similar services at other facilities like Azalea Park, Carrier Park, Memorial Stadium, ball fields, etc. Staff recommends additional staff analysis into this suggestion if City Council is interested in exploring a "park ambassador" for Pritchard Park.

C. Pritchard Park Design Considerations

Design modifications that may improve the existing park entail policy decisions that are worthy of additional public input and City Council consideration. Staff has developed a

proposed list (Attachment C) of suggested considerations for Pritchard Park improvements. It is staff's recommendation that the role of the Pritchard Park Committee be to review and refine the proposed design modifications by working with staff from the Parks and Recreation Department. Once the committee develops a proposal for design considerations, it would be tasked with hosting community input sessions on proposed design modifications. After the plan is modified to reflect community input, it would be presented to City Council for consideration. Staff will develop a revised committee charter and timeline if Council supports this role for the committee.

Homelessness

Three common themes also emerged in the area of homelessness: improving access to existing support services, medical and mental health care and affordable housing. The most common suggestions related to support services dealt with increasing access to daytime services and enhancing coordination among existing service providers. Access to affordable housing options was also cited as a barrier to ending homelessness.

Currently, the city of Asheville supports efforts to end chronic homelessness through the Asheville-Buncombe Homeless Initiative, which is the community collaboration implementing the 10 Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness. The major focus of the effort is the end of chronic homelessness through the Housing First model, which seeks to place individuals in permanent, supportive housing. In Fiscal Year 2006-07, Asheville contributed \$30,000 from CDBG to support this effort, and the same allocation has been budgeted for FY 2007-08. In addition, the City Council approved a \$20,000 allocation to Homeward Bound/A-HOPE Day Center through this year's Outside Agency process.

Based on the community's input, staff recommends Council schedule a specific review of the city's efforts targeted at addressing homelessness. Staff would present information about the structure of the Homeless Initiative and the 10 Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness, staffing and resources dedicated to the program and related performance measures.

Downtown Social Issues

During the public input process, a number of downtown social issues were included with feedback on Pritchard Park and homelessness. Among the most commonly cited were public drunkenness, feeding in Pritchard Park, disruptive behavior in the park and litter. Through staff contact with the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce/Tourism Development Authority, concerns about downtown panhandling have also been raised.

From July 1, 2006 to June 15, 2007, Asheville police officers made 3 felony arrests, 39 misdemeanor arrests, and 2 traffic arrests at Pritchard Park. Additionally, officers issued 113 citations for misdemeanor offenses (i.e., panhandling, trespassing, intoxicated and disruptive behavior, possession of marijuana, etc.), 12 traffic citations, and 2 infraction citations (i.e., parking citations) in the park.

In addition to the district officers assigned to Pritchard Park area, police presence in the downtown business district is supplemented by downtown augment. A permanent assignment in the augment schedule is the Pritchard Park area. Officers have a presence in the Pritchard Park area on a daily basis from noon until 11 p.m. This area also includes the businesses along Haywood Street, College Street and Patton Avenue near Pritchard Park. Officers patrol the area

on foot and are responsible for making contact with business owners as well as patrolling Pritchard Park.

With these resources, officers are in Pritchard Park or at close proximity to the Pritchard Park at least once an hour everyday.

In March 2007, City Council received a report from the Downtown Commission outlining a review of the Downtown Social Issues Task Force recommendations. Several items that received Council direction in March are moving forward, including a pilot program for graffiti removal and the Spare Change for Real Change initiative. Other recommendations are in the process of additional staff analysis, including options for developing a Nuisance Court and a community service program directed at downtown cleaning. Staff recommends Council schedule a review of these programs in August for additional consideration and direction.

Summary of Recommendations

- Develop a plan and funding options for staff presence and enhanced programming in Pritchard Park, including an option for an ambassador or monitor during peak usage hours.
- Re-engage the Pritchard Park Committee to evaluate community input and staff recommendations for Pritchard Park design modifications.
- Continue targeted law enforcement efforts in the Pritchard Park area with an emphasis on panhandling, trespassing, intoxicated and disruptive behavior and other related violations.
- Schedule City Council review of the structure, staffing, programs and performance measures of the Asheville-Buncombe Homeless Initiative and the 10 Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness.
- Schedule City Council review of staff research and recommendations on developing a Nuisance Court and community service program directed at downtown cleaning. An update on the Spare Change for Real Change initiative and graffiti removal pilot program could be delivered as part of the same report.

Attachments:

- (1) Summary Report on the Community Forum on Homelessness
- (2) Pritchard Park Observational Report
- (3) Pritchard Park Design Considerations



City of Asheville
Community Forum on Homelessness
May 29, 2007 Summary

Report presented July 10, 2007

Executive Summary

On Tuesday, May 29, 2007, the City of Asheville held a community forum on homelessness at the First Presbyterian Church of Asheville. The assembly opened with a presentation on the history of Pritchard Park by city staff member Alan Glines followed by an update on the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness by coordinator Amy Sawyer.

Citizens then broke into six small focus groups to reach consensus on two key questions:

- 1) What support services are needed in our community to help people who experience homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless?
- 2) What type of community programming would you like to see in Pritchard Park?

Each focus group recorded its input and presented their overall findings in a wrap-up assembly. After the forum, the city continued to receive written comments from the public until June 11, 2007.

The purpose of this report is to present a summary of the information collected at the forum as well as the complete input from every focus group and subsequent written comments.

Community Forum

Table 1 categorizes the top three answers from every focus group according to each question.

Question 1: Answers to the first question generally fell into one of three categories: increasing/enhancing existing support services, improving access to medical and mental health care, and increasing the stock of or access to affordable housing.

- **Increasing/enhancing existing support services:** All five groups included an item that related to increasing or improving existing services. These responses included increasing the availability of services, ensuring stable funding for programs and enhancing coordination among existing service providers. Specific recommendations for more day facilities, including public restrooms and laundry facilities, were also included. Some responses focused on procedures at shelters (i.e., allowing families to stay together as opposed to separating men and women) and increasing access to case managers that could help connect housing and support services for clients.
- **Improving access to medical and mental health care:** Four out of five groups included a recommendation related to medical care, mental health services and/or substance abuse treatment. The recommendations all addressed either the affordability, access to or quality of these services. Improving mental health services with an emphasis on adequate public funding for such services was the most common response.
- **Increasing the stock of and/or access to affordable housing:** Three out of five groups included the need for more affordable housing or enhanced access to affordable housing options. The Griffin Apartments were cited as a successful model.

Question 2: Answers to the have also been divided into three broad categories of recommendations: park maintenance and operations, park programming, and park amenities.

- **Park maintenance and operations:** Most answers to the second question dealt with park maintenance and operations. Four out of five groups included a recommendation to implement an “adopt-a-park” or “park ambassador” program. The purposes cited for these programs included improved park maintenance, planning, information sharing and public safety. Other items included better park maintenance and cleaning through improvements like paved walkways.
- **Park programming:** Three out of five groups addressed park programming with an emphasis on diverse and welcoming events. Table 2 presents specific programming recommendations including art shows, markets, movies, etc.

- **Park design and amenities:** Three out of five groups included the need for access to public restrooms and water fountains at the park.

Written Comments

As of June 11, 2007, the city of Asheville had received 15 written comments, which are included as an appendix to this report. The most common themes of the correspondence are listed below:

- **Using ordinances, rules or guidelines to prohibit certain activities in Pritchard Park:** Nine citizens recommended that the city should prohibit certain activities or behaviors in the park. Out of the suggested prohibited activities, public feeding and other “social services” were the most common. Others included littering, foul language, sleeping on benches, and drunk and disorderly conduct. Enforcement of these ordinances was also commonly emphasized in these responses.
- **Increasing park programming:** Six citizens advocated for increased programming of small events in the park including art shows, acoustic music, community lectures, movies and informational kiosks.
- **Making the park welcoming for all citizens:** Four citizens indicated the park was not welcoming to residents, visitors, and surrounding businesses.
- **Improving park maintenance:** Three citizens recommended enhanced park maintenance including sanitation services, pressure washing and landscaping.
- **Increased capacity for daytime homeless support services:** Three citizens recommended increasing the availability of daytime support services for the homeless. Two citizens included A-HOPE as a model for daytime services that needed to be expanded or replicated.

Table 1. Summary of top three answers

focus groups	question 1	question 2
group one	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create support service system that keeps families together. Shelters separate men from women and children even when they enter the shelter as a family. 2. Affordable housing 3. More funding to improve mental health services and including hospitals 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborative "adopt-a-park" program that include event planning and maintenance 2. Create liaison/ambassador to build relations between homeless citizens and citizens that are fearful of approach them 3. Restrooms at the park
group two	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional affordable housing units 2. Access to healthcare, concerning mental and physical illness 3. Consistent and stable funding for homeless programs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintenance and clean-up of park 2. Diverse range of activities to welcome all 3. Park ambassador to provide information to public, park monitoring, and maintenance
group three	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community education and review of policies, services, and attitudes 2. Supportive services that are on going, concentrated, and comprehensive (meets all needs), family friendly, coordinated, open when needed, and available to all who need them. Program centers also need 24-hour restrooms. 3. Macroeconomic support in housing, transportation, jobs, and other anti-poverty priorities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Park market 2. Create more welcoming physical items in park 3. Public relations and community programming
group four	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More day facilities, public restrooms, and laundry centers 2. More work on mental health state/government system 3. More permanent housing like the Griffin Apartments 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ambassador program 2. Public Restrooms and drinking fountains 3. Pave paths in Pritchard Park and increase overall maintenance
group five	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Affordable substance abuse treatment with full array of treatment options 2. More case managers to help homeless get housing (Habitat for Humanity and Manna) 3. Access to medical, dental, psychological, pharmaceutical, substance abuse, and outpatient services 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unprogrammed community space available to all and community bulletin board 2. Access to restrooms and water 3. Adopt-a-park program. 52 groups (one group each week of year)

	Support Services	Medical/Mental Health	Affordable Housing
Question 1	7	5	3
	Maintenance & Ops	Programming	Amenities
Question 2	7	4	4

Table 2. Summary of recommendations according to area

Question 1: What support services are needed?	Question 2: Community programming in Pritchard Park?
<p>Increasing/enhancing existing support services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public bathrooms, hygiene facilities, and laundry • Bus lines that cover larger geographical areas; bus services after 6 pm and on Sundays • Message board with general information to assist homeless • Comprehensive addiction treatment facilities • 24-hours Central Service Center to reduce fragmenting of homeless services • Day shelters with larger facilities, increased hours, and storage for personal belongings • Job bank and Job corps that create jobs for homeless citizens and pay a living wage • Quality daycare services • Address or PO Box programs for homeless to help them find jobs • Policies to enhance programs that provide meals, i.e. Food Not Bombs • Resources for homeless citizens who are released from jail • Listings of rental properties and landlords who assist previously homeless tenants • More “wet” shelters (accept individuals who are intoxicated) 	<p>Park maintenance and operations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly “adopt-a-park” program to provide maintenance and program planning • Information Kiosk to educate and integrate all park users (tourists, bus owners, etc.) • More landscaping and grass in park • Create park ambassador system to support and clean park • Redesign park infrastructure for easy maintenance • Organized litter control program • Create event-scheduling system and advertisement system • 24-hour food vendors in park • Community bulletin board • Pressure wash/clean park surfaces and • Pave paths in park • Create park pride by reviewing and enhancing park maintenance schedule
<p>Improving access to medical and mental health care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive addiction treatment facilities • Improved mental healthcare services • Increased funding and enhancement of healthcare facilities, including hospitals • Easy access to medical and mental health facilities without 4-6 week waitlist • Create more detox programs • Concentrated outreach to chronic homeless with mental illness • Greater work on mental health stability programs • Rehabilitation programs and substance abuse programs • Rehabilitative diversion for mental health – opposed to jail • Shelters after detox – “halfway” houses 	<p>Park programming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community singing/concerts • Community meetings held within park • Arts Exhibits including paintings and sculptural designs • Architectural competitions • City regulations/permit process for easier use of park • Keep the drum circle • Silent Movies • Performing arts programs • Diversity celebrations and programming • Local talent shows • Organize historic park events • Sunday breakfasts in park
<p>Increasing the stock of and/or access to affordable housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention of homelessness with rental and mortgage subsidies • Affordable housing on bus lines • Inclusive housing ordinance • More housing units like Woodfin and Griffin complexes • Create housing policies for existing units that are more lenient on bad financial history • Address systemic problems of affordable housing, discrimination against homeless, tax structure concerning high property values, and rising taxes • Monitor creation and development of “truly” affordable housing • Landlord incentives to provide homeless housing – no deposit and cheaper rent • Support for section 8 housing 	<p>Park amenities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public grill and picnic area • Welcoming physical features • Park market • Public restrooms • Cigarette receptacles and trash containers

Focus Group Summaries

Group 1

question 1

question 2

top three answers

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|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Create support service system that keeps families together. Shelters separate men from women and children even when they enter the shelter as a family. 5. Affordable housing 6. More funding to improve mental health services and including hospitals | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Collaborative "adopt-a-park" program that include event planning and maintenance 5. Create liaison/ambassador to build relations between homeless citizens and citizens that are fearful of approach them 6. Restrooms at the park |
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complete list

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services for males over age 13 in shelters – Boys at age 13 are separated for mothers and placed in men's shelters • Transportation (personal vehicles or similar accessibility) and more bus lines that cover large geographical areas. Transportation services after 6pm and on Sunday • Create shelters for single fathers – none exist now • Comprehensive addiction treatment facilities • Support for section 8 housing • Improve mental healthcare services through increased funding and enhancement of facilities, including hospitals • Public restroom/washrooms • Affordable housing • Food • Expand the number and services of day shelters; increase hours, service capacity, and facilities • Job bank and Job corps to give homeless citizens the opportunity to find jobs • Expand need for daycare and improve quality of daycare providers • Create address or PO Box programs for homeless – help them find jobs • Information and brochures to pass out to homeless • More public spaces • Create policies to enhance programs that provide meals, i.e. Food Not Bombs • Improve health services for homeless • DC Central Kitchen – work program that gives homeless cooking skills and catering jobs • Department of Correction needs to have better system of resources for new releases, i.e. Home Boys, Inc. • Assistance to keep homeless warm in winter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More family oriented environment and programs for children • Keep park mixed/eclectic • Turn fountains back on • Install drinking fountains • Keep the drum circle • Silent Movies • Community singing/concerts • Art show • Food Not Bombs program • Poetry night/ open microphone • Performing arts programs • Arts and crafts booths/market day • Art for kids • Chess competitions • Social justice, nonprofit, rallies, and demonstrations • More landscaping and grass in park • More maintenance; park funding should be comparable to park use • Cigarette containers and trash containers • Public grill and picnic area • Organized litter control program • Dancing in park; square, folk, and contra dancing • Feed homeless more at park – park accessible to everyone while shelters do not have capacity • Create Public ownership of park through monthly "adopt-a-park" program where park maintenance and program planning is assigned to various groups (nonprofits, high schools, city organizations, civic groups, and etc.) |
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Group 2

question 1

question 2

top three answers

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| 4. Additional affordable housing units | 4. Maintenance and clean-up of park |
| 5. Access to healthcare, concerning mental and physical illness | 5. Diverse range of activities to welcome all |
| 6. Consistent and stable funding for homeless programs | 6. Park ambassador to provide information to public, park monitoring, and maintenance |

complete list

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create list of landlords who can work with tenants who had trouble finding housing• More affordable housing• Continue 10-Year program funding• Message board at visitor center with general information to assist homeless• Replace abandoned buildings with affordable housing• Expand the facilities and services of the A-HOPE program or create similar program• Provide more funding to A-HOPE program• Free bus system/free bus passes• Public restrooms downtown that available 24-hours and have security – more than one location• Easy access for mental health facilities without 4-6 week waitlist• Increase services for homeless women to meet the demand• Place more beds in detox facilities – increase service capacity• Create more “wet” shelters in Asheville• More beds in shelters• Easier access to medical care• Decriminalize homeless• Create opportunities for networking in different communities – reduce public fear• Research policies in neighboring communities – create homelessness research unit | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information Kiosk and staff in park• Job fairs in park• Feed the homeless programs• Local talent shows• Support drum circle on Friday nights• Bible studies in park• Diversity celebrations and programming• Arts and crafts market – Art displays• Community clean-up events• Reduce child molesters in park• Free concerts• Ashtrays for smokers• Redesign park infrastructure for easy maintenance• Fix water fountains and install drinking fountains• Put restrooms in park or near park• Move support from business owners in the surrounding area• Educate and integrate all users of the park (tourists, bus owners, and etc.)• Create park pride – review and enhance park maintenance schedule• Create park ambassador system to support and clean park |
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Group 3

group three

question 1

question 2

top three answers

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|---|---|
| 4. Community education and review of policies, services, and attitudes | 3. Create more welcoming physical items in park |
| 5. Supportive services that are on going, concentrated, and comprehensive (meets all needs), family friendly, coordinated, open when needed, and available to all who need them. Program centers also need 24-hour restrooms. | 4. Public relations and community programming |
| 6. Macroeconomic support in housing, transportation, jobs, and other anti-poverty priorities. | 5. Park market |

complete list

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engrossment• Create and model detox program after "The Healing Place" in Louisville, KY• Create decriminalization task force to change homelessness ordinances, police protocols, and no vagrancy laws• Need more shelter space• Stock of affordable housing/rental – city provide incentives for landlords to waive deposits, bad credit, and criminal history• Job training programs• "Clearing house" system – system of help• Concentrated outreach to chronic homeless with mental illness• Increase number of "wet" shelters immediately• Extend operating hours for bus system• Address poverty areas• Day centers – facility to spend day in with lockers and storage• 24-hour public restrooms• Mental Health and Healthcare | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saturday programming of kids• Permanent cigarette receptacles• Better park maintenance• Water fountains• Street performances• Events that involve whole community• Meals to bring community together – build better relations and perception• Formal "adopt-a-park" program• Community meetings held within park• Story-telling program• Chess tournament• Create event-scheduling system for park – create advertisements for scheduling system• Increase park availability for everyone• Information kiosk• Encourage diversity in park• Keep welcoming physical features• Organize historic park events – celebrate history of town and park |
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Group 4

group four

question 1

question 2

top three answers

1. Public Restrooms and drinking fountains
2. Pave paths in Pritchard Park and increase overall maintenance
3. Ambassador program

Complete List

- Permanent facilities for homeless women
- Greater work on mental health stability programs
- Rehabilitation programs
- More substance abuse programs
- More permanent, affordable housing like the Griffin apartments
- "Wet" shelters
- Rehabilitative diversion for mental health – opposed to jail
- Draw industries/business that provide adequate jobs – eliminate working poor
- Model "change"/housing among those not homeless
- Public bathrooms, hygiene facilities, and laundry
- Family shelters
- Landlord incentives to provide homeless housing – no deposit and cheaper rent
- Shelters after detox – "halfway" houses
- Safer public housing
- Studying low-wages and providing low-wage help
- More "day" facilities with aggregate service/motivation programs
- Reduce fragmenting among services – create central service center
- Expand and raise awareness of existing programs, i.e. A-HOPE program
- Government supported "grey rooms"
- City sponsored tents and shelters
- Job-training/placement programs and partnerships with city and businesses
- Community engagement
- Increase city support/funding to local programs
- Monitor creation and development of "truly" affordable housing
- Landlord sensitivity training and understanding
- Improve street amenities, such as drinking fountains
- Partnerships/coordination of services with faith community and volunteers
- Discourage homeless dumping/relocation from other areas
- Leave it alone
- Create ambassador program to encourage community involvement
- Public restrooms and drinking fountains
- Turn-on water fountains
- Caseworkers in park
- Kiosk for services and facilities
- Continue to have programs that feed homeless
- Arts in the park – creating community program; "Arts 2 the people"
- Kiosk for tourism
- Green/farmers market
- Architectural competition – to create paintings and sculptural designs in park
- Pave or stone the pathways
- Pressure wash/clean park surfaces
- Increase maintenance
- Take down walls and partitions

Group 5

group five

question 1

question 2

top three answers

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Affordable substance abuse treatment with full array of treatment options 5. More case managers to help homeless get housing (Habitat for Humanity and Manna) 6. Access to medical, dental, psychological, pharmaceutical, substance abuse, and outpatient services | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Unprogrammed community space available to all and community bulletin board of events 4. Access to restrooms and water 5. Adopt-a-park program. 52 groups (one group each week of year) |
|--|---|

complete list

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create more opportunity for shelter availability • Create work programs that pay homeless citizens a living wage • Eliminate permanent barriers/exclusions to getting public housing • Create seamless economic safety net • Post discharge healthcare • Integrated comprehensive systematic approach to provide services • Help with rental deposits • Create Mental Health Crisis Stabilization Unit capable of serving large population • Prevention of homelessness with rental and mortgage subsidies • Affordable housing on bus lines • Police officers know who case managers are to connect with instead of incarcerate • Communication and coordination of homeless support services • Make information more available to homeless citizens • More places for homeless to eat • Inclusive housing ordinance • Service center open 24-hours or 12-hours (minimum) • More housing units like Woodfin and Griffin complexes • Accessible restrooms and showers • Create housing policies for existing units that are more lenient on bad financial history • Address systemic problems of affordable housing, discrimination against homeless, tax structure concerning high property values, and rising taxes • High taxes on high status items (luxury tax) • Endless unemployment benefits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show our diversity • Open as it now – decent organized • Encourage community use • Adopt-a-street – 52 businesses and volunteer agencies • Silent movies • Cigarette receptacles • Sunday breakfasts in park – businesses sponsor meals and participants clean park • Spare change for real change • City regulations to make it easier to get permit to use park • Community bulletin board • Celebrations in park • Monday – Saturday breakfast in park; easily accessible and open to everyone • Create user-friendly design with restrooms to stop urination problem • Create safer park – remove places to hide bushes and walls • Clean dirt off walls • Evolve from the community • No community programming • Get water fountains working and install drinking fountains • Create grassy areas and wider sidewalks; park not big enough • Open permitting process • Allow unstructured programming • Create personal responsibility – encourage park cleaning • Schedule art programs – concerts and bands • Equitable fair use of park • 24-hour food vendors in park • Encourage lawful park use • Access to restrooms • Enjoy drum circle |
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Written Comments

Written Comments

From: Judy Swan [jswanway@charter.net]

Sent: Thu 5/31/2007 6:34 AM

To: ndula@ashevillenc.gov

May 31, 2007

attn: City Council:

I was distressed at the views expressed Tuesday evening of Pritchard Park as a good place for homeless people to hang out. Earlier in the day I was on the trolley tour of 6 of the downtown facilities available for people in need. These agencies appear to have developed niches of services for the homeless. Most impressive.

'A Hope' seems to meet many needs of people without homes, unfortunately they are geared for less than a third of the number they serve on a daily basis and they are only open for five hours each day. In meeting the homeless challenge an expansion of both their hours and space would be a good first step.

We have lived downtown for 13 years. I remember when pesky pigeons were the primary nuisance in Pritchard Park. It is time to bring back a wider variety of users of P Park (perhaps not the pigeons!)

Asheville is an art and music city. In addition to the Drum circle, other small, acoustic only groups, local art shows, Arts2People events, easels set up by artists drawing architectural elements of the buildings surrounding the park, silent films are all fun for tourists, neighbors, people with nowhere else to go and people just walking by.

An information kiosk with a map of downtown, "you are here, and that is there type of information"...under a strong plastic cover. It could be a version of the tear off map with advertising given out by the Chamber of Commerce and advertisers downtown. Perhaps the city could get some financial support from that publisher.

The park is filthy most of the time. I know it gets treated with a leaf blower but it is still too hard to keep clean. Consider astro-turf or a permeated surface that allows water to drain through as an alternative to the non-existent tanbark.

Removing the brick walls would take away another all day hanging out place. Could the bricks be re-used for paths or are there old granite curbs in a city warehouse?

Some cities have only benches with dividers for sitting, not lounging or sleeping.

I hope you will consider ways to bring a more diverse group back to Pritchard Park.

Thank you,

Judy Swan, a member of DARN steering committee

From: Larry Turner [ltur@skyrunner.net]
Sent: Thu 5/31/2007 2:23 AM
To: ndula@ashevillenc.gov

It many ways it seems Pritchard Park has become a center for homeless and street people and has alienated itself as a place of refuge and quiet contemplation for people who live and work downtown.

Larry Turner

From: Laura Voso [Irvoso@gmail.com]
Sent: Wed 5/30/2007 8:27 PM
To: ndula@ashevillenc.gov

I understand the city is considering ways to improve Pritchard Park. We have been residents of the downtown for more than 10 years and therefore remember what the park used to be. Although the park itself wasn't much of an attraction in some ways it was better than it is now. Then, with it also being the bus terminal, there was a constant coming and going of people and buses. It seemed like a city center because of that activity even though the park was decrepit and not attractive to use, for homed or homeless. So the city undertook a plan to turn it into a true city park for all who frequent downtown. Although the physical changes that were made were well thought out and implemented, the hoped-for objective was not met. As you know the park has become a hangout for homeless and others who are inclined to loiter there.

Now we know in this day and age one cannot exclude persons from using the park just because they don't fit ones sense of social standing but it does seem that the city can enforce rules that would make the park suitable for all. Rules such as no smoking, no littering, no groups larger than five, no drugs, no foul language, no meals, no sleeping, no lying down on benches, no sitting on walls, no spitting, etc. could go a long way to making the park pleasant for all. Of course the key to success will be enforcement. But I am confident the police could get things under control if they knew the city fathers (mothers) were behind them. And, no, this isn't intended to prevent homeless from using the park but is requiring them to follow the rules if they want to use the park. And, yes, as a city we should do what we can to help the homeless but why can't we do it on our terms, not theirs?

I know the city has a plan to end homelessness in 10 years. But 10 years is a long time and of course there is the possibility that the plan won't actually work. But even if it does we will have made the park a pleasant and attractive place for all in the meantime, and maybe the homed and homeless will see that they can be in the same space if all follow the same rules .

DARN members
Philip and Laura Voso

From: william may [wemay@charter.net]
Sent: Wed 5/30/2007 8:20 PM
To: ndula@ashevillenc.gov

I am so tired of hearing **about Pritchard Park**. I think everyone agrees that it at the very least has not been maintained well...whatever the reasons. Let's get on with "fixing it up" and **maintaining** it. Let's not repeat past mistakes. Let's stick to a budget and make sure it is at least as well **maintained** as the other parks in the city. There should be no excuses from sanitation/city. If it is decided by the committee to feed the homeless, etc. in the park then it is the responsibility of the committee to assure that Pritchard Park gets the **sanitation services and police services** that will be needed to make it as **clean and safe** as the parks that are not serving the homeless...ex. It should be as clean and safe as Pack Square. If that requires more attention from **city services** then make sure that is in the **budget** and is used for that purpose only.

Marion May

From: Lorraine Krause [lorraine46k@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wed 5/30/2007 9:53 AM
To: ndula@ashevillenc.gov

I attended the homeless initiative meeting and came away with a very different feeling than I had when I arrived.

I was impressed with all of the many programs already in place and the long term goals which are spelled out. The problem seems to be one of consistent funding not a lack of good ideas.

There was a great deal of concern raised about health care issues, a lack of places to go and doctors willing to treat people in need of mental and physical help who don't have insurance. The shortage of affordable housing, shortage of beds and daytime shelter services were all brought up. These are all genuine concerns for the people in need.

However, what I found disconcerting were the ideas presented concerning Pritchard Park. Pritchard Park is not there to be a "home" for the homeless, it does not solve the homeless problem, it enables it. It is one of the crown jewels of Asheville and it is being abused. It is not the place to have additional services to aid the needy. It is not the beautiful park, in the middle of the city, that it was meant to be, a place where one feels comfortable taking the family. I don't go there with my grandchild to let him play, we tried that once, nor do my husband & I go there to have a picnic lunch because the entire park is monopolized by people with no place better to go. You can not sit quietly and enjoy the park because panhandling is the norm, I feel the plight of the needy and give to the organizations which are meant to help. A larger issue are those who are drunk and disorderly, my grandson was frightened by two men who were yelling at one another. This is not something that should be tolerated in and around the park but it seems to happen on a regular basis.

The meeting last night made me realize how many good people there are in Asheville who truly want to make a difference and solve the problem of homelessness. But, I heard people who were not looking for a way to help themselves, instead they were listing all of the problems of the existing services.

The one thing that must not be given over as a solution to helping the homeless is Pritchard Park. We must not continue to allow this beautiful oasis to be the livingroom of people who don't seem to have the pride of ownership it takes to be responsible for the care of such a wonderful spot.

Please don't allow Pritchard Park to become a social service center Pritchard Park needs to be a place we can be proud of, a place for residents, tourists and downtown workers to relax and enjoy the beauty that is downtown Asheville.

Sincerely,

Lorraine Krause

From: Rich Olejniczak [rich@mtnhousing.org]
Sent: Wed 5/30/2007 10:10 AM
To: ndula@ashevillenc.gov

Thank you all for coordinating the tour of homeless services and the homeless forum yesterday! I know it takes a lot of effort to pull stuff like that together so fast. Homelessness is a very complicated and overwhelming problem, so the more people we have educated about the situation and working toward solutions the better. I thought the tour went great (Nick), and the forum was very positive with a lot of positive ideas generated. I know we don't have the resources to address all the ideas, but you have to begin somewhere. Please thank all the rest of your staff who also took the time out to help.

Sincerely,

Rich Olejniczak
Community Investment Officer
Mountain Housing Opportunities, Inc.

From: Michael L. Cannizzaro [mcannizzaro@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Thu 5/31/2007 9:07 AM
To: ndula@ashevillenc.gov

We are full time residents of downtown Asheville, living around the corner from Pritchard Park. We love so much about this city---with the exception of what we witness almost daily in that park location. My husband and I actually avoid going near it if possible.

Let me briefly explain that both of us have had extensive experience with the homeless in our former residence. My husband is a former employee of the Sheriff's Department in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and I am a former teacher having taught in West Virginia and Florida before moving to Asheville. My husband has spent years working with various relocation programs for them and I, as a former teacher, spent numerous community service hours with my students on helping the homeless. Therefore our comments/observations come from first hand experience---not just the situation at Pritchard Park.

We both have come to the same conclusion about the homeless and we have reached it from different paths. At some point in all of our lives, we must "choose" how we are going to live. There are millions of Vietnam Vets (and other vets) who are NOT homeless and have moved on to lead productive lives and contribute to their community in positive ways. To use the Vietnam War as an excuse to live homeless is just not acceptable. We all know people who have "temporary setbacks" in life and my husband and I are the first to lend a hand. That could be a stranger or a family member but the key "word" here is a "temporary" set back. We no longer are willing to take on family, friends, or community members who simply choose a "lifestyle" that is easier or for whatever excuse refuse to fit into the mainstream. If one wants to live on the street or Pritchard Park or anywhere else, when there are community programs available to assist, then that is their choice.

At not point should society (Asheville) be expected to "pave over" a park with concrete so that they can spend their days there smoking, drinking, doing drugs etc. and we (the taxpayers) will show up at the end of the day to "hose down" their chosen lifestyle. This is a classic example of "enabling" in the worst extreme. Why would we make it easier on anyone to trash up a city park?

Prichard Park could be landscaped into a beautiful downtown park full of grass, flowers, and trees that could be used by tourists and residents alike. This would be a park that everyone could enjoy---not just the homeless which is the current situation.

Our immediate recommendation is to check with the local governmnet in Greenville who tackled the homeless problem with great success. They experienced many of the same issues that we are facing now in downtown Asheville. Greenville now has a thriving downtown area that encourages visitors and residents to enjoy the parks---not avoid them.

My husband and I are certainly willing to do our part to make Pritchard Park beautiful again. Currently it is simply a delapidated park with a dirt floor that is filled with cigarette butts, urine, feces, drugs and people that create that debris.

Let's work together to make it GREEN----not white concrete or cement. Doesn't the title "Pritchard Park" lend itself to something beautiful?

Michael and Cheryl Cannizzaro

From: Loricron Clock Co. [loricron@gmail.com]
Sent: Thu 5/31/2007 3:16 PM
To: ndula@ashevillenc.gov

As a business owner here in WNC I want to express my concern that Pritchard Park not be allowed to become a place where the majority of residents and visitors to downtown Asheville do not feel comfortable. If this park becomes a place to provide social services it will do nothing to truly end the

plight of the homeless. But, it will succeed in keeping Pritchard Park a city park that no one cares to use as it was intended.

Feeding those in need, providing an information center directing newcomers to shelters, or other planned activities which should be taking place in those shelters, is not the purpose for which this park was created.

Additional funding for the current programs is what is needed. Let's not lose sight of the real problems which are being addressed by the 10 year plan to end homelessness: the need for more affordable housing, longer shelter hours, better medical treatment to name a few.

The answer does not lie in Pritchard Park.

Sincerely,

L. Krause
Loricron Co., Inc.

From: Mary Ann West [mrsmaewest@yahoo.com]

Sent: Thu 5/31/2007 2:59 PM

To: ndula@ashevillenc.gov

Pritchard Park should first of all be a park, not a soup kitchen or overrun by people that do not care to contribute to our city in any way. The park is currently used as A-Hope's day center for people that are given food, showers, phones, lockers, etc. without any accountability whatsoever. They sit or lie around the park the entire day, use foul language, have bare chests, litter and completely lack motivation or pride in the park that is to be shared by everyone. Then, at the end of the day, they go back for their handout and someone comes along and cleans up their mess because we are humiliated to have a dirty park. What

is wrong with this picture. The park is off limits for tourists, business people and residents. There is no way anyone would enter the park and feel comfortable because of the drunks, druggies and cursing. Because of the placement of the benches and walls, they form a human barrier around the park that gives an unsafe appearance to our park. Imagine bringing your children there?

Take down the walls and take away the benches on College Street. Build upon the "Paris of the South" slogan used by Tourist Development and have artists with easels on that street. Who would complain?

Everyone, please let us get Asheville on the road to being proud of our downtown park.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann West

From: Bernie Krause [bern43@gmail.com]

Sent: Thu 5/31/2007 2:52 PM

To: ndula@ashevillenc.gov

Please take my concerns to the next City Council meeting.

Make Pritchard Park the park it was intended to be ... a place where residents, tourists and downtown workers feel comfortable spending a bit of time enjoying the city. Right now it is being used almost exclusively by people who do not seem to understand the responsibility of caring for one of the most beautiful spots in Asheville making it difficult for others to desire to go into the park. What a shame.

Sincerely,

Bernie Krause

From: Byron Greiner [byron_greiner@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thu 5/31/2007 5:49 PM
To: ndula@ashevillenc.gov

I would like to weight in the same general items that Susan Griffin has supplied to your office to be included in the report to City Council. The park was not intended to be a day center for the homeless as it has become today. We need to take back the park for our tourists and tax paying residents and businesses to utilize. The answer is not to add more and more facilities to entice the homeless to make it their destination daily. We need to discourage the use of the park by the homeless and do what we can to get these people into housing and into a job. The homeless issue is a difficult one and should not be associated with the review of how to make Pritchard Park better for our visitors & residents.

Thanks

Byron Greiner, Broker, Realtor, SRES

From: Kato Guggenheim [katogugg@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Thu 5/31/2007 2:25 PM
To: ndula@ashevillenc.gov

I am writing in response to the 2 questions posed at your recent meeting. I do believe it is important to separate the two issues presented, namely the use of Prichard Park for all citizens and the issue of homelessness.

It seems to me that the above two issues are always confounded in any discussion of Prichard Park. Prichard Park is a public, community space, supported by tax dollars and supposedly available to all. There is no reason for those of us who are interested in the use and welfare of the park to deal with the issue of homelessness. Homelessness is a national, ubiquitous problem that communities throughout the country are attempting to cope with. It should be addressed separately by those who are interested and committed to solving the problem of homelessness. The use of Prichard Park should be available to everyone provided they follow guidelines and exhibit behaviors that are requisite to all users.

Prichard Park should be a vital place for everyone's use. Programs such as art shows, an information booth, games, are just the beginning of a creative use of this space.

My own suggestion would to devote the use of the park to becoming an aesthetic and peaceful oasis in the middle of the city.

Kato Guggenheim

From: GateKing2@aol.com
Sent: Thu 5/31/2007 1:51 PM
To: ndula@ashevillenc.gov

May 31, 2007

Mayor Bellamy, City Council members, and Pritchard Park Committee members,

I attended the Forum on Homelessness at First Presbyterian Church on Tuesday night. I was very disappointed that the city chose to tie together the issue of homelessness with the question of the best use of Pritchard Park.

Public bathrooms seemed to be the big issue of the evening - and I can't think of a worse amenity in Pritchard Park. The general consensus of the group (not surprising, considering the turnout) was that we should offer programs and services that make Pritchard Park even *more* of a gathering spot for the homeless. To be frank, if the top suggestions from last night's meeting were implemented, Asheville

would quickly become known as the Homeless Mecca of the Southeast - NOT a sobriquet that would encourage investment and tourism. Those suggestions are akin to building more roads to stop suburban sprawl. You end up feeding the very problem you are hoping to solve.

Don't get me wrong - I think it is important that we acknowledge our homeless population and do everything we can to get them into permanent housing. Making Pritchard Park into a virtual day shelter does nothing to change their housing status. There are other demographics to consider when planning how to use this area - business owners, residents and tourists, for example. I can count on one hand the number of tourists in that park during the day, yet it is in the heart of the downtown business district. While everyone has a right to use the park, why do we have no programming or services in place that would encourage broader use of the park?

I would like to see the park function as a sort of outdoor hotel lobby. People pass through, stop for a chat or coffee, play a game of chess or just sit and read for awhile. A manned kiosk could serve as an information source for both tourists and locals. Scheduled daytime activities - a weekly art show (perhaps coordinated by Arts2People), a farmers' market (through A.S.A.P), tai chi classes, noontime music in the park, summer lecture series (maybe a Saturday "History of Asheville" or "Architecture of Asheville" talk), dance lessons, a city permitted coffee/cold drink cart - would filter many people through the park each day. At night, the Friday drum circle is one of Asheville's best traditions, and Saturday nights would benefit from the revival of Silent Movies in the Park.

Please do not confuse the homeless issue with the park issue. Homelessness will not be solved by keeping Pritchard Park as a daily gathering place for the homeless community. Are the feeding programs in Pritchard Park - a place with no water or toilet facilities - the best way and place to accomplish that important mission, or is there a better, weatherproof and more sanitary place to reach the same goal? More effort should be spent to expand the services and facilities of places like A-Hope, so that the basic needs of the homeless can be cared for in a comfortable, safe environment, and the services needed to change their situation can be readily accessed every day. They deserve better than a park bench.

Pritchard Park should be a jewel in the center of this city. Please help make it one.

Thank you.

Susan Griffin

From: Adrian Vassallo [AVassallo@dixon-hughes.com]

Sent: Thu 5/31/2007 1:47 PM

To: ndula@ashevillenc.gov

As a resident of Asheville, I spend a lot of time downtown, both for business and pleasure. I was unable to make it to the forum Tuesday night, however, I have heard some of the comments and issues that were raised. I think it would be an egregious mistake to combine the issues of homelessness and the usage of Pritchard Park. Although both these issues deserve attention, it would be unfair to the whole Asheville community to investigate the use of the park strictly from a homeless person's perspective. A park should be inviting to everyone and, right now, Pritchard Park is hardly that.

I agree that there are many issues that need to be addressed for the homeless population. I currently serve as Treasurer of the Asheville Downtown Association and we are trying to support homeless services through the Spare Change for Real Change program. However, our mission is also to be the voice of downtown. In that regard, Pritchard Park has become an area that is not a pretty place for our residents and our tourists. We need to address the proper usage of this park in a way that is welcoming to all and to address it from a security perspective.

I hope that the Mayor and City Council see that although both issues are in need of community attention, they shouldn't be looked at as a whole.

Sincerely,
Adrian Vassallo, CPA
Dixon Hughes PLLC

From: Sherri Singleton [sherri@sherrisingleton.com]
Sent: Thu 5/31/2007 9:28 PM
To: ndula@ashevillenc.gov

I am a member of DARN and was asked to forward you my ideas of how I see Pritchard Park in the future. I live in 21 Battery Park condominiums and am always very uneasy about walking by that park due to harrassing comments and just general bad behavior. It's unfortunate because that park is right in the middle of everything and one of the first things tourists to our wonderful city encounter.

I'm not sure why brick walls were erected, but I do think if we could replace them with trees, shrubs, etc. it would be a much more open & inviting (not to mention green) space without places for people to sit and/or lie down all day long.

It's just so brown, dirty and concrete. I recently returned from a meeting about Pack Square park and boy do they seem to have the right idea. Also, because that park is across from the police station, there should be better supervision of that area. Why can't we have someone actually police Pritchard Park and not just sit and talk with the homeless or addicted people who hang out there all day and watch them litter the area and make rude commentes to people passing by? I do think a little supervision (and enforcement) would help immensely!

I also think holding small events on a regular basis would help clear the area of people who should be getting help somewhere and attract those of us who would like a nice green place to go to relax, listen to a small concert, etc.

Well, that's about it. Thank you so much for your consideration.

In good health,

Sherri Singleton, CPT

-----Original Message-----

From: billcrownover@bellsouth.net [mailto:billcrownover@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Monday, June 25, 2007 10:19 PM
To: Lauren Bradley
Subject:

My responses to the homeless in Asheville would be as follows:

1. Support services should be enhanced in any way possible for meals, lodging, medical care etc. The Rescue Mission, ABCCM do a good job but similar sites need to be established elsewhere in the city. Part time jobs could be provided by the city during storm aftermath for cleanup help etc. I think the plan for panhandling should help reduce the practice.

Pritchard Park response:

1. Encourage out of the box thinking for using this space. Many forms of entertainment could be scheduled to add something special to entertainment. Craft demos, varied musical acts, artists of all sorts,
etc.

Thank you,

Bill Crownover

-----Original Message-----

From: innaroundcorner@bellsouth.net <innaroundcorner@bellsouth.net>

To: Mayor Terry Bellamy

Sent: Mon Jun 25 19:13:07 2007

Subject: Re: Re: Business Input request from Mayor Bellamy and Gary Jackson

As a business person from Black Mountain, we do hear comments from our guests who frequently visit Asheville in conjunction with their stay in our town. Numerous guests have complained of being accosted by panhandlers, asking for money. This seems to be more in the evening hours (though some have said it's happened during the day). This gives them the distinct impression that Asheville isn't the safest place to be. Several have commented they would like to dine outside at several of the restaurants, but didn't appreciate being approached for their leftovers?!

In the 10 years we've had our B&B, comments similar to the ones mentioned are not an every-morning conversation around the breakfast table - but enough to mention.

This has nothing to do with homelessness....but the most frequent complaint from our guests about Asheville is the lack of parking - and the cost. I've had several get towed.

Nancy Schnepf
Inn Around the Corner
Black Mountain

From: Steve Cochran [mailto:scochran@leadershipresults.org]

Sent: Tuesday, June 26, 2007 10:37 AM

Thanks to the Mayor and City Manager for facilitating this dialogue. At a recent Pack Square Conservancy info-meeting for downtown residents this was the hottest topic. The general thought being, "If Pritchard Park is like this now, what will the Square be like when we add many more acres and 'services'?"

I'll offer to this discussion what I offered to that one - the "Business Improvement District" (BID) model, which has been most effective in Washington DC, where my wife and I moved from two years ago. A snapshot of what a BID does for a specific area follows, taken from the "Golden Triangle BID"'s web site (<http://www.gtbid.com/>):

About the Golden Triangle BID

The Golden Triangle Business Improvement District (BID) works every day to enhance the central business district in Washington, DC from the White House to Dupont Circle and 16th Street, NW to 21st Street, NW. The BID's primary focus is to provide a clean, safe and friendly environment within its 42 blocks of public space for area workers and visitors.

In Washington, my office fronted on Franklin Park, in the heart of DC, and the heart of the Golden Triangle BID. That beautiful space - a much larger version of Pritchard Park - was taken from being 'needle central' and a go-around obstacle to a great asset for the city and especially the businesses that depend on the downtown tourist and worker trade.

By offering constant, friendly, professional and engaged service and support to legitimate visitors and others who want to enjoy the downtown, the vagrant population finds it uncomfortable and unsupportive. The workers aren't rent-a-cops, but they serve as a front line group of eyes and ears for the DC police, in addition to keeping the area shining, engaging and welcoming. Several info kiosks, map services, and area guides are available, but mostly it's the constant clean up and encouragement of 'others' to use the area and feel safe and welcomed that makes a difference. The funding comes from the area offices, restaurants, shops, etc., that have a vested interest.

It's not just that area in DC - there are several other area BIDs, forming even a friendly competition among them, with great pride in "their" district. I still work in DC a few days a month and see the ongoing benefits.

For my money, it's worth exploring - again, here's the Golden Triangle BID site:
<http://www.gtbid.com/>.

And again, thanks to the Chamber, the Mayor and City Manager for asking.

Steve Cochran

Consultant

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for Sustainable Development**

Washington, DC
www.USBPartnership.org

Blog

<http://steve.sustainablewnc.org/>

I've read quite a few letters to the editor in the Citizen-Times regarding this problem. With all the positives that Asheville has going for it, this is perhaps the biggest negative. I also think that this homeless population is a large contributor to the trash that you see around downtown.

Regarding Pritchard Park. Back when Leni Sitnick was Mayor, I discussed the potential of Pritchard park becoming "homeless central" with several of the then council members. At that time, I told them that the only way to prevent the area from becoming what it has become is to get people other than the homeless to use the area. To achieve this, we needed some sort of retail, restaurant or any other business that would attract taxpayers to the park area. The shops did not need to take up much room, only needed to bring people. Look at many of the small shops in town, Loretta's, Salsa's, Bonnie's Little Corner (I don't know the current name). If any of this had been built, the homeless would not have made this their campground. I still think this is the solution. A couple of small retail/restaurant shops will clean up the area and add tax base at the same time. When Bele Chere is in town, they are all gone.

Regarding the homeless issue, in my opinion, to many of the homeless, it is a lifestyle choice and not an issue of being down on your luck. Certainly there are those hard luck cases however, they are the ones who are seeking help and not a handout. I have lived here since 1975 and I can tell you that many of the homeless that you see are the same ones you saw 10 years ago. That is a lifestyle choice. All the social programs in the world will not change them because they don't want to be changed. I think the shelters need to be moved away from downtown to make the trip less easy. An effort needs to be made to identify which are actually down on their luck and which are in lifestyle mode. Help those that want it, the "lifestylers" need to make their lifestyle away from downtown.

There was talk at one point about making it illegal to give to the homeless. If we do that and include some text in our chamber brochures that are given to visitors, the visitors can be aware of the issue

and feel more comfortable saying no. We can make ourselves sound caring (as we are) and as being proactive in dealing with the problem. We can ask them to help us and tell them what their part is (donâ€™t give them money). A homeless person can probably make more money begging on the street than working a minimum wage job. They donâ€™t have to pay taxes, utilities or bills, why would they change? It sounds good to me right now. If they are not getting money here, they will leave. As long as we feed, clothe and â€œpayâ€ them, why not stay? Asheville is a great place to live for them too. The only way we can take care of the problem is to take the good times away. Jail is not a solution it is only shelter for a night or two. The police release them as soon as they need the space for someone else. If we continue to coddle them, they will always be a problem and more of them will come because word spreads in their community as much as it does in any other.

Laura, THAT is my 2 cents.

Thanks for asking,

Robert Camille
Camille-Alberice Architects, PA
12 South Lexington Ave.
Suite 100
Asheville, NC 28801
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828.251.1465 fax

www.camille-alberice.com

Pritchard Park Observational Survey

Objective:

The purpose of the Pritchard Park Observational Survey was visit the park on regular intervals throughout the day to record any patterns of usage or park conditions.

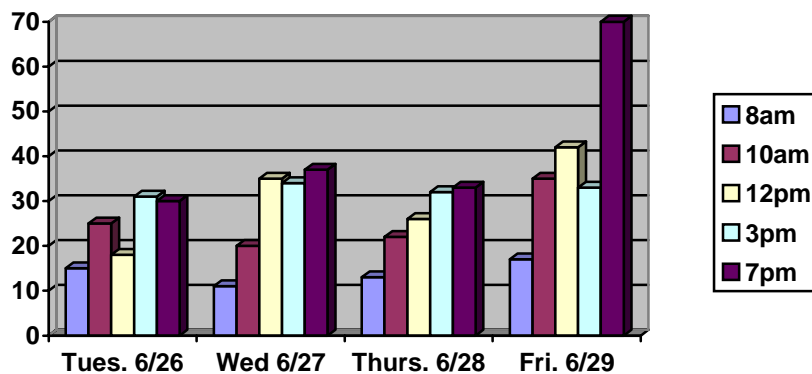
The observational survey was conducted over the course of four days. The survey entailed 1-2 person(s) going to the park to record how many people are in the park along with notes about other activity (i.e., park cleanliness, park uses, police presence, park maintenance, etc.).

At the beginning of each observation, staff noted four key observations: date, time, weather, and park occupancy. Each site visit lasted between 15-30 minutes and typically occurred at the following times: 8 a.m., 10 a.m., noon, 3 p.m. and one observation in the evening, generally around 7 p.m.

Park Patterns Observed During Survey:

Park Usage

Prior to 8 a.m., the park is unused and empty. Between 8-8:30 a.m., the park experiences an influx of an average of 14 individuals. Throughout the course of the day, the number of people in the park steadily increases with peak usage in the afternoon and evening hours. The number of people in the park during peak hours ranges between 30-40 individuals. Of the four days, Friday experienced the most park usage, with the greatest number of park users on Friday evening.



There are two main sections of the park that experience the most amount of use: the upper wall adjacent to College St. and the chessboard area located at the corner of Patton Ave. and Haywood St. Most individuals took advantage of the shady areas provided at these two locations.

Most individuals who patron the park typically stay for extended periods of time (1 hour+). Most of the regular users of the park were adult men with few women and children seen on a daily basis.

The Friday night drum circle draws the largest crowd and the most diversity.

Park Cleanliness

Litter was a significant issue noted on all occasions, particularly cigarette butts. Large items such as aluminum cans or newspapers were for the most part absent. Vegetation (shrubs, trees, flowers) was well groomed, and the water features were operating as designed. One of the two water fountains was out of service. An employee from Parks and Recreation Department was observed providing maintenance services during two site visits.

Public Safety

A police presence was observed during 8 out of the 16 visits, or 50% of the time. Several social issues and ordinance violations were observed, particularly sleeping on park benches, panhandling, public urination, intoxicated and disruptive behavior and swearing.

Other Notes

Observers were stopped by tourists to ask for direction on several occasions.

Please see below for additional details for hourly observations.

Daily Observational Notes

June 26, 2007 - Tuesday

Time: 8:00 am

Weather: Sunny, 65°F

Park Attendance: 15

- Upon arrival there was one man sitting on a park bench.
- Litter was visibly present.
- Water features were operating as designed.
- One of the two water fountains was out of service.
- Internal walkways were dusty and not well marked.
- Most of those using the park carried with them backpacks.
- Individuals took advantage of chessboard.
- Solicited for change.

Time: 10:00 am

Weather: Sunny, 75 °F

Park Attendance: 20-25

- Two men had taken off their shirts.
- One man was stretched across a park bench and appeared to be asleep.
- A group of four visitors approached me to ask for directions to the local library.
- A patrol car made its way past the park.
- Pigeons were prevalent (20).

Time: Noon

Weather: Sunny, 80 °F

Park Attendance: 15-18

- There were approximately 4 individuals who looked like they were sleeping.
- While most of the individuals were simply sitting on the park benches, a number of individuals were gathered on the upper level of the park near Mayfel's Restaurant.
- While sitting on a bench, I noticed one woman going back and forth between two groups of people. Toward the end of my 15-minute observation, she left the park swearing at one of the groups.

Time 3:30 pm

Weather: Cloudy, Light Rain, 65 °F

Park Attendance: 31

- The highest concentration of which were gathered on the outer portions of the park specifically near Mayfels Restaurant and the chess board.
- A police officer circled the Park.
- There were a few trash bags left on the upper portion of the park.
- 1 patrol car circled the park.

Time: 8:00 pm

Weather: Partly Cloudy, 70 °F

Park Attendance: 30

- The majority of those gathering in the park were located along the upper portion of the park.
- While there, a man urinated on the upper wall across the street from Mayfel's.
- Over heard a conversation from a man who was selling bicycles. From the conversation, he mentioned he had removed the serial number from the bikes.

June 27, 2007 - Wednesday

Time: 8:00 am

Weather: Sunny, 70 °F

Park Attendance: 11

- It seemed that unlike the previous day's observations, there were several individuals who arrived at the park to drink coffee and read the newspaper.
- In addition to the 11 patrons, there was also a Parks and Recreation employee cleaning up.
- The cleaning attendant swept up as much of the trash as possible but it seemed difficult given the volume of small sized litter (i.e. cigarette butts) and the small grained mulch used to cover the non paved/bricked sections of the park.
- 1 of 2 water fountains was still out of service.

10:00 am

Weather: Sunny, 75 °F

Park Attendance: 20

- 1 patrol car
- Most people tended to gather in the shaded areas near the upper wall and the Wachovia-side chess board area.
- There were several elderly individuals taking advantage of the park.
- Several individuals in wheel chairs gathered at the top of the park near Karmasonics.

Time: Noon

Weather, Sunny, 85 °F

Park Attendance 31-35 people

- 2 patrol cars one stopped for an extended amount of time.
- Large sections of people gathered on upper wall.
- Several men went without shirts.
- Several individuals (4) looked to be eating lunch.
- People played chess
- High use by citizens in wheelchairs
- 1 water fountain was not operating

Time: 3:30 p.m.

Weather: Partly Cloudy, 80 °F (beginning to rain)

Park Attendance: 34

- 2 Patrol Cars
- 1 Police Golf Cart

- High use by citizens in wheelchairs
- One man shirtless
- Chess and group socialization is the primary driver of group dynamics.
- Parks and Recreation staff were painting an electrical box and removing graffiti.

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Weather: Partly Cloudy, 75 °F

Park Attendance: 37

- The majority of the individuals were still gathered on the upper wall near Mayfels.
- The chessboard near Wachovia was in use.
- One patrol vehicle circled the block.

June 28, 2007 - Thursday

Time: 7:30 a.m.

Weather: Sunny, 65 °F

Park Attendants: 0

- Cigarette butts and small pieces of garbage lingered near the park benches and the upper walls of the park.
- 1 of the two water fountains was still out of service.

Time: 5:15 p.m.

Weather: Sunny, 85 °F

Park Attendance: 32

- The majority of the individuals were still gathered on the upper wall near Mayfels.
- The chessboard near Wachovia was in use.
- The hose nozzle near the electrical box on the top portion of the park was being used to fill up water bottles.
- Most of the benches were occupied.

June 29, 2007 - Friday

Time: 8am

Weather: 68 °F, Sunny

Park Attendance: 17

- Upon arrival the park is relatively empty as usual.
- 5 people in park – 4 sitting on park benches, 1 sleeping on park bench
- Park begins to fill at 8:15am
- Attendance jumps from 5 individuals to 15 – 17 individuals
- Park littered with cigarette butts
- Litter was cleaned yesterday – litter remains at lower level this morning
- People congregate at upper edge of park adjacent to College St.

Time: 10am

Weather: 76 °F, Sunny

Park Attendance: 35

- People congregated around perimeter of park
- Some few people (6) inside park on benches or sitting platforms
- One person visibly impaired – lying on sitting platform
- Group of people playing chess on park tables
- Several individuals relaxing on park benches and walls

Time: 12pm

Weather: 81 °F, Sunny

Park Attendance: 40+

- Many of the same individuals from 10 a.m. crowd
- People dispersed all throughout park
- Park attendance fluctuates because people keep coming and leaving
- People walking through park to get to other destinations
- Box of food was left in park to provide meal for homeless individuals
- Police Patrol Car

Time: 5pm

Weather: 81 °F, Sunny

Park Attendance: 60

- Crowd congregated for the weekly “Drum Circle”
- Crowd concentrated on Upper Side of Park adjacent to College St. and on sitting platforms
- More diversity of users in park – individuals from earlier in day, drum circle participants and observers, and individuals who are just enjoying Friday evening
- Police patrol car patrols area

Conclusions:

- People tend to gather on the walls in the shaded sections of the park.
- The permanent board games seem to be a big draw to the park.
- Most individuals use the park for extended amounts of time. Very few simply use the park for 30 minutes or less.
- Cigarette butts and small pieces of paper constitute the largest share of litter.
- Police patrols were observed.
- Unpaved walking portions of the park seem to create lots of dust.
- A fairly large number of citizens in wheelchairs use the park on a regular basis.
- Many people walk through the park to get to another destination.

Suggested Pritchard Park Design Modifications for Pritchard Park Committee Consideration and Public Process

Landscape

- Add more plant material for density
- Plant different palette of plant material
- Plant materials with more mature sizes
- Add more boulders to keep public from fountains
- Add low metal barrier to perimeter flower beds

Fence

- Install ornamental fence to prohibit access to plants

Pathway

- Replace walkway with concrete/aggregate rock

Benches, trash receptacles and bike rack

- Add brick pads to area underneath all of above

Cigarette urns

- Purchase urns for placement in the park

Regulatory Signs

- Purchase signs for placement in the park

Irrigation

- Install irrigation system to maintain landscaping